

NEW DIFFERENTIATION OF CONTENT AND ONLINE MEDIA AUDIENCE IN INDONESIA: A STUDY ON *TIRTO.ID*

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ABSTRACT

Differentiation in various businesses is very important to make a company able to compete, not least in the media industry. There are many online media in Indonesia that compete in the media industry. They have differentiation on both the content and the audience side. Tirto.id is one of the online media that recently appeared in Indonesia by doing a significant differentiation both from the content and audience. In the past few years, Tirto.id has been able to emerge as one of the most widely used media of public opinion. This study attempts to analyze Tirto.id by using the Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat (SWOT) analysis to see the strengths and weaknesses of Tirto.id through their differentiation. The study also includes the main target audience of Tirto.id and its potential to earn advertising. However, Tirto.id has survived in the media industry in Indonesia and received several awards.

KEYWORDS: *Differentiation, Content, Audience & Tirto.id*

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INTRODUCTION

Tirto.id Road Entering Media Industry in Indonesia

Since the fall of Soeharto's New Order government in 1998, the media in Indonesia continue to grow, not least the online media. In its development, online media in Indonesia emerged with various differentiation to fight in the online media industry in Indonesia. Contemporary differentiation such as *Mongabay Indonesia*, which concerns about the environment, *Kapanlagi.com* which discussed celebrities and pop culture in Indonesia, and *Panditfootball.com* which concentrates on the world and local soccer sport in the middle of the tidal soccer league of Indonesia. Each of these media is targeting its own readers. *Tirto.id* that appeared in 2016 then comes with a claim as a precision media and targeting readers who are not satisfied with short stories in the online media in Indonesia are minimal data and more to sell the sensation. For example, in a study of *Kapanlagi.com* which shows that the media always attach importance to the speed and pursue the number of clicks. As a result, in making the news, the media is not doing kroscek the truth so that the resulting news seems random (Wenerda, 2015). *Tirto.id* is present as one of the media that prioritizes both quantitative and qualitative research data in its content and targeting young and intellectual readers in Indonesia.

In the early days of its emergence, *Tirto.id* was busy talking about their reporting of a treason case they published from the writings of Allan Nairn (a US journalist) previously published in The Intercept entitled "Trump" Indonesian Allies in Bed with ISIS-backed Militia Seeking to Outs Elected President ".*Tirto.id* translated the article and published it April 19, 2017, entitled "Investigasi Allan Nairn: Ahok Hanya Dalih untuk Makar". In the paper, Allan Nairn pointed out that there is a group of movements that intend to oppose Indonesian President Joko Widodo. Allan mentioned some of the important names involved in the movement include Trump, Fadli Zon, Hary Tanoesoedibjo,

Prabowo to TNI Gatot Nurmantyo (they are important people in Indonesia).

Since the news was published, *Tirto.id* became a public discussion and was discussed in other media in Indonesia. *CNN Indonesia*, for example, April 23, 2017, reported clarification of General TNI Gatot Nurmantyo whose name is mentioned in the writings of Allan Nairn. In the interview, General Gatot did not want to respond to the news. *KompasTV* displayed a confirmation to the Chief Editor of *Tirto.id* Sapto Anggoro and Salim Said's opinion as a teacher of the Indonesian Defense University in *Kompas Petang* program 26 April 2017. In an interview with the media, Sapto explained that he had asked permission to Allan Nairn and The Intercept before publishing the news. The reason *Tirto.id* publish is that it is interesting and the report form is In dept. In addition, another consideration is because The Intercept is not a media carelessly. Meanwhile, Salim Said said Allan Nairn's writings are merely fantasy. Allan Nairn is considered to still think like the New Order era, while Indonesia has been in the reform era.

On another occasion, *Kompas.com* reported with the title "Politics PKS iniMintaJokowiBela TNI terhadap Investigasi Allan Nairn". In the news, *Kompas.com* quoted Member of House Commission I, Sukamta who asked Joko Widodo (Jokowi) as the President of Indonesia to respond to Allan. "I hope there is a need for a defense statement by the President against the TNI, which is currently facing the issue of treason. This will cool the atmosphere and eliminate suspicion among the various components of the nation "(*Kompas.com* 23/04/2017). *Detik.com* reports also with the title "Soal Tulisan Allan Nairn, Polisiakan Koordinasidengan Dewan Pers" April 25, 2017. In the news, *Detik.com* interviewed Argo Yuwono (Head of Police Public Relations of Metro Jaya). "Later right (Press Council) as an expert we also present, we coordinate with the Press Council as well" (*Detik.com* 25/04/2017). In addition, *Tirto.id* got a lawsuit from Harry Tanoesodibjo (one of the owners of a television company and MNC Group in Indonesia whose name was also mentioned in Allan Nairn's report) on May 27, 2017. The Press Council, which handles press disputes, then evaluates the published report in violation of articles 1 and 3 of the Journalism Code of Ethics. The Press Council also considered that some of the contents of the complained news had not fully complied with the element of balance and test of information. *Tirto.id* as a broadcasting institution bound by Law No. 40 of 1999 on the Press then received the Press Council's appraisal and apologized to the crowd and readers.

Despite the controversy and political situation of the time, *Tirto.id* began to be known more widely since then and by itself ready to fight in the media industry in Indonesia. It must be admitted that the issues raised by *Tirto.id* at that time became their own strengths to promote their presence in the media business in Indonesia and get readers. Many people then read and share the published writings on social media. The upheaval that occurred then became a picture of *Tirto.id*'s journey in exploiting the opportunity to enter the media industry arena in Indonesia until now a media with several awards from Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) Jakarta.

RESULTS

Content Differentiation

One of *Tirto.id*'s attractions is their ability to produce content with quantitative and qualitative data on public issues. In addition, the media's ability to display infographics in every published news is also a strength of its own if we compare with other media. *Tirto.id* produces news based on scientific research results that have been conducted in various countries. They also conduct independent research to reinforce the published news data. The public need for data cannot be ignored. Policy-making involving public interests requires data. The urgency of this data into its own strength for *Tirto.id* as one of the online media that claim self-based data in its contents. Readers who need data to strengthen their confidence

in a problem can see the results of research on a particular problem through this online media. Infographics displayed by the media can make it easier for readers to understand the news content in general in a short time. Infographic data in the news also makes *Tirto.id*'s own distinctive feature, though recent media displays of infographics in their content.

From the beginning, *Tirto.id* committed to entering the world of an industry by offering content in long form and analysis. They see this has not been maximized by other media in Indonesia. The decision to make content differentiation is certainly very appropriate as a newcomer of the media business in Indonesia. "Yes, we see other media has not been much in long form and analysis, we took the opportunity," said Zen (one of *Tirto.id* editors) in an interview with researchers on September 23, 2017. Differentiation of this content supports to attract readers who are not satisfied read the online media content is short and only in the form of Straight News. Thus, *Tirto* has been able to differentiate well and strategically.

In seizing the market, target market setting becomes important. The determination consists of evaluating and selecting one or more market segments that have the most appropriate fit with organizational capability "(Assauri, 2012). The consequence in publishing data-based news is that not everyone can read data well, especially if the reader does not understand the tradition of scientific research. Readers who can not read the data well will be difficult to understand the news from *Tirto.id*. This can be seen as a weakness in this media. Meanwhile, given that to create data-driven media, extra work is required, investing in great technology, and adequate human resources, it is not easy for other online media to compete with *Tirto.id* as a data-driven medium with an eye-catching infographic look. "Yes, we are trying to display data-based news, if anyone wants to argue must use data," Sapto Anggora said in an interview with researchers November 6, 2017.

The content differentiation also has the potential to cause an interruption, because interference to a company may come from internal and external. For *Tirto.id*, the most potent external intrusion is people who feel annoyed with the content of the news *Tirto.id*. Often this media content touches the sensitive sphere of preaching, for example, the news about communism. Although *Tirto.id* preaches strong data, communism has been officially banned in Indonesia under the Decree of the Provisional People's Consultative Assembly (MPRS) number 25 of 1966. Until now, the government of Indonesia still prohibits things that smell of communism (Kompas.com 05/10/2016). One of *Tirto.id*'s content touching on this issue is the news titled "Film sebagai Alat Propaganda Rezim Penguasa" (*Tirto.id* 26/09/2017). In addition, content that touches the sensitive issues of a company is also often reported. For example, the news about the company *Ice Cream Alice*, in the published news explained that there was exploitation of workers conducted by the company (*Tirto.id*, 04/29/2017). However, the courage to touch sensitive issues with supporting data in the content produced by *Tirto.id* has become a force in this media to exist and to have many readers. Disturbance can also come from within *Tirto.id* itself. Remembering to produce data-based content requires diligent workers and expensive research costs, it can be a threat to these media companies if they do not use effective financial management. Workers should also be taken care of because their journalists will certainly go the extra mile to get the data when the coverage to complement the content that matches the characteristics of *Tirto.id*. If not properly facilitated, this could be a threat to *Tirto.id* related to the sustainability of the media company.

Young Readers and Intellectual Middle Class

The initial rhyme of its emergence, *Tirto.id* has claimed itself as a precision media. Although it is debatable, looking at the data used by *Tirto.id* is the research and display data accompanied by infographics we can

conclude that *Tirto.id* includes precision media. *Precision journalism is a form of journalism writing that focuses on searching data and the accuracy of empirical information. The work of journalist coverage must have academic credibility so as to create a scientific-style writing that is readily accepted by the reader (Setiati, 2005).* Mayer in his article entitled "The New Precision Journalism" explains that new precision journalism is an attempt to treat journalism, such as science, adopts scientific methods, scientific objectivity, and scientific ideas for the whole process of mass communication. *Data-based journalism is able to explain complex realities based on data presented through infographics (Gray, 2012).* With deferences and precision media papers, *Tirto.id* is able to get their readers. Readers who require deeper information and accompanied by scientific data that support the argument in each post. *Tirto.id*, in this case, is certainly not alone, other media that put forward data as well as *Katadata.co.id* which claims itself as a media company and economic and business news research by combining the power of journalism and sharpness analysis. Nevertheless, *Tirto.id* looks better in the news and infographic writing process presented. With these powers, *Tirto.id* is able to compete with other media, including media, which also put forward scientific data in its preaching. Threats from other media will not have a significant effect as long as *Tirto.id* is able to make complex data in the scientific language into easily understandable news and through infographics that appeal to the target audience.

The demographic data of *Tirto.id* readers come mostly from educated and youth classes. In terms of education, the access to *Tirto.id* is dominated by those at the College and Graduate School. Meanwhile, 74.3% of readers are located in Java (the most accessible island of education, health, transportation, and others in Indonesia) such as Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya. Data readers from outside Java such as Makassar, Medan, Pekanbaru, and others amounted to 25.7%. Readers with male genitals are 72.6% and women are 27.4%. Based on age, the reader *Tirto.id* is dominated by the young age between 25-34 years old by 35%, 18-24 years, 23.3%, age 35-44 years, 19.3%, 45-54 years, 9.0%, 55- 64 years, 9.1% and 65 years, and above by 4.1% (*Tirto.id* internal data). Based on these data, then we can conclude that the reader *Tirto.id* is a young generation of the age. Meanwhile, from the education side readers, *Tirto.id* are people who are and have completed studies at a certain level. "Our target audience is the middle class, but it means not the middle class in income, but intellectually" (Interview Anggoro, Juli, 20, 2017). This target audience is a strength for *Tirto.id* to survive in the media industry in Indonesia. Given that the gross enrollment rate of secondary education in Indonesia has also increased by 2014 73, 53% and 2015 to 79.02% (Republika, 16/06/2017).

Given the amount of educational participation, *Tirto.id*'s chances of attracting educated readers are still potential. With its condition as an online media along with the age, education and geographical position of the reader, the target audience of *Tirto.id* is certainly the people who are able to access the Internet. Meanwhile, internet users in Indonesia continue to grow. Thus, this condition can be exploited by *Tirto.id* to continue to increase the reader so that it can be commodified. In business, it is advantageous, especially to survive in the world of the media industry. Commodification in question here is the process of converting the value of use into exchange rates. With its form as an online media, *Tirto.id* has a considerable opportunity in commodifying its readers to benefit from advertisers who need a specific type of consumer. This is similar to what Mosco once said:

"Digital systems which measure and monitor precisely each information transaction is now used to refine the process of delivering audiences of viewers, listeners, readers, movie fans, telephone and computer users, to advertisers. In essence, companies can package and repackage customers in forms that specifically reflect both their actual purchases and their demographic characteristics. These packages, for example, of 18-25 year old men who order martial arts films

on pay-per-view television, can be sold to companies, which spend more for this information because they want to market their products to this specific sector with as little advertising spilling over to people who would not be interested or able to buy" (Mosco, 2009).

Networked and Interactivity for Readers

The availability of technology for media coverage is currently very profitable in the business side as it significantly alters many things in terms of production, distribution, and consumption. "*Media convergence is more than simply a technological shift. Convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres, and audiences*" (Jenkins, 2006). The pattern of reader relationships with the presence of media convergence also changes. Readers not only can access through one channel, but multichannel. Online media are able to facilitate the reader by providing comment fields. Thus, online media is more interactive than newspapers or magazines. *Tirto.id* as one of the online media in Indonesia also applies networking system and interactivity for readers. Through networking system, this media site can be accessed through various platforms such as *Facebook, twitter, and Instagram*. The majority of urban readers with a social media platform are readers targeted by *Tirto.id*. This is a strength for *Tirto.id*. In addition to being accessible through social media, the implementation of the networking system also helps *Tirto.id* in distributing their content to readers. Social media allows readers to share or reproduce the content of *Tirto.id* to other users who have not read *Tirto.id* at all. This networking pattern that makes *Tirto.id* able to attract readers from various other platforms than their main site. This is certainly very promising from the business side because it is able to improve the distribution and consumption of news content.

Meanwhile, the number of internet users and social media in Indonesia is also not small. According to *We Are Social* data in January 2014, out of a total of 251,160,124 Indonesian populations, 38,191,873 internet users. The number of active Facebook users is 62,000,000 and that active in mobile is 281,963,665 (Nasrullah, 2015). Internet users in Indonesia continue to increase, this situation is a great opportunity for *Tirto.id* to become an increasingly large media in Indonesia if it continues to attract readers through social media. The networking pattern not only allows *Tirto.id* to attract readers from different channels, but also makes it easier for them to get closer to the reader. Interactivity between *Tirto.id* and its readers can easily be done both through their main site and social media. Interactivity also allows readers to convey their opinions and claims to a news. This allows *Tirto.id* to make opinions and comments from readers in making decisions related to the content they present. Thus, the aspirations of the reader can be channeled easily. Online media Instagram data 2017 shows that *Tirto.id* is followed by 53,400 with engagement/post 1,892 or about 3.54%. The amount exceeds *Detik.com* (one of the most widely followed online media in Indonesia with 530,000 Instagram followers) which is only 0.15% engagement/post (*Tirto.id* internal data). These data indicate that *Tirto.id* keeps trying to maintain their closeness with the reader. Most media in Indonesia do not engage in intense interactivity with their readers. This opportunity can continue to be utilized *Tirto.id* forward so that readers still feel closer to the media they read. "*In the media community, the horizontal integration of direct two-way interaction provides aspects of social integration, and a sense of belonging that cannot be provided by vertical media types,*" (Holmes, 2012). The current technological advancement has also helped *Tirto.id* have another distinctive feature in the presence of *altiMeter*" to measure public sentiment on an issue. If the data that *Tirto.id* can through this" *altiMeter*" be utilized to continue to maintain trust and increase the reader, then this media will be able to continue to compete in the media industry in Indonesia.

CONCLUSIONS

Media business in Indonesia continues to grow in terms of content and reader differentiation. The differentiation of content made by *Tirto.id* is by producing news based on quantitative and qualitative research data. Accompanied by an interesting infographic, this media is able to survive in the media business in Indonesia. Readers targeted by *Tirto.id* as one of the new media in the media industry in Indonesia are readers of young age, educated, have internet access and social media. In addition, *Tirto.id* is also targeting readers who have the ability to read data either in text form or in the form of infographic. So far, *Tirto.id* can be regarded as one of the newcomer media in Indonesia with a wide reader and content differentiation. These strengths make them able to survive in entering the world of the media industry in Indonesia.

The weakness of the media that often displays data through this infographic is, not everyone can read the data, it takes its own intellectual ability to understand the news that displays the data, especially data that are complex. This in itself has limited the reader market to *Tirto.id*. The challenge ahead is for them to consistently present data from accurate research results so that they can still be a reference for the public. Opportunities to attract more readers would still be wide open given the internet users in Indonesia continues to increase. In the meantime, threats may come from within and outside. The threat from within is that we both know the cost of research is not cheap, *Tirto.id* often do their independent research to create content. Budget research costs must be calculated carefully so that management remains in good health. Threats from the outside can come from those who feel aggrieved with the content of *Tirto.id* as what has happened in the case of Allan Nairn's writing that led to the prosecution of *Tirto.id*.

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